



In November 1996, a national advisory committee issued its report on ways to eliminate black lung and silicosis in U.S. coal miners. The committee made more than 100 recommendations, based on a six-month review of technical material, presentations by scientific experts and members of the public and mining community, as well as on visits to mines. The nine-member committee established by the Secretary of Labor recommended that the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) take full responsibility for all com-

pliance sampling. (Currently both mine operators and MSHA take samples to see if mines are within legal dust limits.) Until MSHA is able to take over the full program, the committee felt the Agency should increase its dust sampling. Some of the committee's recommendations aimed at improving MSHA's efforts to eliminate coal mine dust diseases are:

- ⇒ Consider lowering the standard for coal mine dust and reduce exposure to silica
- ⇒ Establish separate standards for respirable silica and coal mine dust
- ⇒ Adjust the standards if miners work longer work weeks
- ⇒ Use a single full-shift sample to determine compliance, rather than averaging samples
- ⇒ Focus on environmental controls (rather than respirators and work practices) as the primary means to keep dust exposures below allowable limits

- ⇒ Require mine operators and MSHA to verify that dust control plans are working
- ⇒ Require dust control plans at surface operations when dust levels exceed 1/2 the standard
- ⇒ Examine dust control measures as part of on-shift examinations [30 CFR 75.362(a)(2)]
- ⇒ Require surface mine operators to sample every other month (as underground mine operators do)
- ⇒ Get miners more involved in dust sampling and in making sure dust control plans work
- ⇒ Develop a program to protect contractor employees exposed to respirable dust
- ⇒ Extend medical testing (chest x-rays) to surface miners, including contractor employees
- ⇒ Improve dust sampling and dust control training programs
- ⇒ Notify miners of all sampling results, work activities, dust controls used and production rates on sampling days
- ⇒ Examine the dust controls at mines where miners develop lung disease

The committee also made recommendations for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), including research on dust controls, health effects of dust exposure, improved medical screening, and evaluation of training methods. The committee also recommended that NIOSH develop dust sampling instruments to continuously monitor dust levels.

Call (703) 235-1358 or your local MSHA office for a copy of a pamphlet with more of the Advisory Committee Recommendations. The full 116-page report with all committee recommendations is available from MSHA on the Internet at www.msha.gov.

**U.S. Department of Labor
Mine Safety and Health Administration
J. Davitt McAteer, Assistant Secretary**